G:SLow:lsh:6/8/67

Approved in G, June 9, 1967

(174)

10033
FILE
RS/R

(6)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

SECRET

DATE: June 8, 1967
12:45 p.m.

SUBJECT: USS LIBERTY Incident (Telephone Conversation)

PARTICIPANTS: Deputy Under Secretary Foy D. Kohler
A Counselor of the Soviet Embassy in Washington

COPIES TO: S cc EUR cc
U cc WH cc
M cc DOD cc
G cc Embassy MOSCOW cc
NEA cc

ORIGINAL/COPY TO RM/R FOR RECORDING

Mr. Kohler asked to speak to Mr. Tcherniakov but was informed by the Counselor of the Embassy that the Charge was in a meeting. Mr. Kohler asked the Counselor to pass a message to the Charge informing him that the message Mr. Kohler had given him this morning was also sent to Moscow via the "Hot Line." We now have a reply from Chairman Kosygin acknowledging receipt of the telegram and informing us that the information was immediately passed to President Nasser. Mr. Kohler asked the Counselor to thank the Charge for his promptness and cooperation in passing the information to Moscow.

Mr. Kohler also noted that Chairman Kosygin had described the vessel concerned as a Liberty-type ship. In fact, USS LIBERTY was the name of the ship concerned.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY [signature] DATE 1/24/03
RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE
TS AUTH 22 REASON(S)
ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☐
DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☑
RELEASE DENIED☐
FA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

POL 27 ARAB-ISR
XR
DEF 1 US
CR US-USSR

(4)

SECRET

MICROFILMED
BY S/S: CMS

GPO 912677

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

(176)

Tuesday, June 13, 1967 -- 3:55 p.m.

Mr. President:

Minister Eyron asked to see me today to pick up a copy of the talk I gave in Middlebury.

In fact, he raised two matters:

From: Walt Rostow

1. The Israeli negotiating position:

E.O. 12356 1.5(a) (b)(3) (c)(3)

[redacted]

2. He then turned to the notes concerning the LIBERTY. He said that he found no difficulty with our finding the issue "incomprehensible." He was disturbed by the use of the word "wanton"; and he would have wished that we had recognized how promptly the Israeli government had informed us of the error. He said Golda Meir had been with Rabin when he was informed; that considerable soldier "almost fainted" at the news of the attack. He was greatly disturbed by the NEWSWEEK item in Periscope. Without in any way going around his Ambassador or the State Department, it was his personal suggestion that both notes might be amended or dropped and the "tone of the exchange lowered." He repeated that he saw nothing wrong at all in our asking how it could have happened; who did it; and our requesting that the Israeli government do something about it. The implication of purposeful action, however, he

POL 27 ARAB-ISR

OFILMED
/S: CMS

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

Tuesday, June 13, 1967 -- 3:55 p.m.

Mr. President:

Minister Eyron asked to see me today to pick up a copy of the talk I gave in Middlebury.

In fact, he raised two matters:

1. The Israeli negotiating position. He said that a month ago there was no serious crisis in the Middle East; 10 days ago they felt they were being throttled; now there is temporary euphoria and relief at the military victory; but they have not had time to think through their position. The job for Israel is, having won the war, now to try to win the peace. He asked if we had any advice? I said he knew our formal positions, notably the President's statement of May 23 and everything else down to the resolution inscribed at the UN Security Council. We are clearly for both territorial integrity in the Middle East and for peace. Our powers to make peace, however, are extremely limited. A major attempt to retrieve the Soviet-radical Arab positions is under way, including apparently a meeting of the General Assembly. A great deal hinges on what kind of a position they take and especially whether it is one that will draw to it the majority in the UN General Assembly and, in the end, moderate Arabs. As the President had made clear in his press conference this morning, we were committed to certain principles in this situation but did not have a program.

He said that he understood this and, without instructions, he would only say this: It is important that the Arabs find out in the political offensive that the Russians cannot deliver any more effectively than they could deliver militarily. If this political counteroffensive fails, he feels that the Arabs may be willing then to talk. I said, once again, that what happened in the General Assembly and happened with the moderate Arabs depended upon the positions put forward by Israel.

2. He then turned to the notes concerning the LIBERTY. He said that he found no difficulty with our finding the issue "incomprehensible." He was disturbed by the use of the word "wanton"; and he would have wished that we had recognized how promptly the Israeli government had informed us of the error. He said Golda Meir had been with Rabin when he was informed; that considerable soldier "almost fainted" at the news of the attack. He was greatly disturbed by the NEWSWEEK item in Periscope. Without in any way going around his Ambassador or the State Department, it was his personal suggestion that both notes might be amended or dropped and the "tone of the exchange lowered." He repeated that he saw nothing wrong at all in our asking how it could have happened; who did it; and our requesting that the Israeli government do something about it. [illegible] implication of purposeful action, however, he

OFILMED
/S: CMS

felt was most unfortunate.

He said that although final confirmation had not come to Washington, it was his understanding that those involved in the attack were about to be severely punished.

I explained to him that there was a good deal of strong Congressional feeling about the matter. In addition, the President and the military were understandably concerned. The language of the note was precise. We found the incident literally "incomprehensible." He said the Court of Inquiry was working as fast as it could. Perhaps when we had conducted our investigation, we could close out the incident with some kind of joint statement.

I noted and said I would pass along his thoughts.

W.W.R. Rostow

cc: Mr. McGeorge Bundy
Mr. Nicholas Katzenbach

CONFIDENTIAL